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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5850
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 000512

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/21/2018

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SUBJECT: FORMER PRIME MINISTER AYAD ALLAWI IS BACK ON THE
IRAQI POLITICAL SCENE

REF: BAGHDAD O-I 13 FEB 08

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Summary. Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi emphasized with the Ambassador in a dinner meeting on February 19 that Iran's growing interference is deterring Iraq's Arab neighbors from establishing stronger diplomatic ties. He received a request to meet with President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during his upcoming visit to Baghdad. Although Allawi was uncertain of his response, the Ambassador urged that he meet with the Iranian to deliver a clear message as to where lines had to be drawn in what was an important relationship for both countries. Regarding internal political issues, Allawi said the Political Council for National Security (PCNS) can be used as one strategy to improve the political process in Iraq by providing strategic direction and vision as a "kitchen cabinet" to the GOI. He was less favorable towards PM Maliki on political reconciliation, and when prodded, did not confirm whether Iraqiyya will return to Maliki's cabinet. He talked at great length about his visit with President Massoud Barzani in Irbil the past week, and his efforts to strengthen President Barzani's ties both in Baghdad and with Iraq's neighbors. To move forward on Article 140, Allawi suggested establishing a commission with agreed-on representation to bring a collective effort towards a solution. End summary.

IRAN AND INFLUENCE ON IRAQ'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS NEIGHBORS

¶2. (S/NF) Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi and Mohammad Allawi (his cousin and former Minister of Communications) joined the Ambassador for a dinner meeting along with PolCouns and Senior Advisor Pearce. Throughout the evening, Allawi highlighted Iran's interference and influence in Iraq repeatedly, especially in southern Iraq, which he said poses concerns for Iraq's neighbors. The Ambassador commented that Iran can be deterred by strengthening the presence of Arab neighbors in Iraq, and encouraged more diplomatic representation here. Allawi agreed that bringing back Arab ambassadors and diplomatic representation is key to restoring this balance, but blamed Iran for the attacks and threats that had caused the Arabs to pull out. Allawi then discussed countries like the UAE, Jordan, and even Egypt, which in the past have supported Iraq, but are growing worried about Iran's growing influence.

¶3. (S/NF) Allawi told the Ambassador he received an invitation to meet with President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad through an interlocutor and also through President Talabani. Allawi said his source conveyed Ahmadinejad is eager to talk with him about strengthening Iran's relations with Arab countries. Allawi questioned why Iranian Ambassador Qommi has not reached out to him regarding the invitation. The Ambassador encouraged Allawi to agree to meet with Ahmadinejad and convey clearly a message the Iranians needed

to hear. "Iran is on the wrong track," Allawi said is the message he would deliver, "and policy is being implemented by the Quds force." The actions of Iran were fomenting enmity and would eventually create a backlash. Allawi said the suggestion of a meeting came ten days ago (February 10), but that he initially heard of an invite two months ago when he was traveling in Lebanon. Allawi went on to discuss prior delegations he sent to Iran when he was Prime Minister, led by both DPM Barham Saleh and VP Abdel Mehdi (then Minister of Finance) on two different visits.

14. (S/NF) Commenting further on Iran's interference in Iraq, Mohammad Allawi noted there are ministers and CoR representatives from Iran "operating" in Iraq. He added, a half million Iranians have been smuggled into Iraq. The Ambassador shared similar concerns heard from citizens in Basrah regarding Iranian influence during his visits, but noted the Iranians are pushing up against limits in Iraq. Ayad also commented he hears the same concerns about Iranian influence from tribes, clerics, and other delegations from the southern provinces. Allawi said he is in the process of developing a political response to the growing influence of Iran in Iraq, and has invited Shia elements to participate in this dialogue.

PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE IRAQI POLITICAL PROCESS

15. (S/NF) Allawi told the Ambassador the PCNS meeting was postponed this week and discussed at great length recommendations on how the PCNS can improve the political process in Iraq. "Without a framework, it is going nowhere," he said. He commented that this type of council was originally one of his ideas, sort of a "kitchen cabinet" to

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press political issues in the GOI and represent those in the CoR. He recently recommended to President Talabani that a smaller group within the PCNS be selected to prepare position papers on key issues and a vision for Iraq. The Ambassador stressed the PCNS could have played a key coordinating role for the political blocs in the CoR during the negotiations over the amnesty law, 2008 Budget, and provincial powers law, which all passed in an omnibus package on February 13. The Ambassador and Allawi agreed that the recent omnibus package of legislation demonstrated the CoR's ability to work deals through give-and-take on contents of each piece of legislation.

16. (S/NF) Regarding PM Maliki, Allawi said he tried to initially support Maliki through Iraqiyya's participation in the cabinet. He noted, however, political reconciliation is lacking and "Iraq will not survive" unless this succeeds. Key issues to be immediately addressed, Allawi said, include refugees, sectarianism, implementing true reform of the flawed de-Ba'athification process including reaching out to Ba'ath party members outside the country, and constitutional review. He then added militias to the list. "There needs to be a shared vision with all parties," Allawi stressed. "If Maliki remains in power," said Allawi, "he needs to assure all Iraqis they are not disenfranchised and are part of the political process."

ALLAWI'S REFLECTS ON MEETING WITH KRG PRESIDENT BARZANI

17. (S/NF) Allawi shared with the Ambassador a readout of his meetings with President Massoud Barzani from a recent trip to Irbil. He noted that Massoud spent the whole time trying to convince him to become Prime Minister again. Allawi also noted Rowsch Shaways, one of Barzani's representatives in Baghdad and former VP and DPM, is "too introverted" and that Massoud needs better representation in Baghdad. "He needs to designate someone he trusts other than Hoshyar Zebari," he added, almost forgetting Massoud's third representative, Dilshad Miran. Allawi sees improving President Barzani's

linkages to Baghdad as a way to engage him more in the Iraqi political process. Allawi also told the Ambassador he is working to broker a meeting between the Arabs in Mosul and President Barzani. Allawi said Massoud has also asked his assistance in arranging meetings in other Arab countries to bridge the gap between the Arabs and Kurds. "The Arab world believes Massoud wants to dismantle the country," Allawi said. He encouraged President Barzani instead to reach out to Iraq's Arab neighbors and build relationships in the region.

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST ALLAWI

¶8. (S/NF) Ayad Allawi's cousin, Mohammad Allawi, spoke on his behalf with regard to accusations from the Ministry of Interior Spokesman that Ayad has financial ties with the "Jund al-Samma" cult (Soldiers of Heaven). He referenced a meeting that several Iraqiyya members recently had with Tariq Abdullah, PM Maliki's Chief of Staff, in an effort to get the accusations officially retracted. Mohammad said, "We are waiting for this to be cleared in the media," but was pessimistic the PM's Office would follow through on any action.

IRAQIYYA'S PROSPECTS FOR REJOINING THE GOI

¶9. (S/NF) Ayad and Mohammad discussed Iraqiyya's prospects for rejoining the GOI. Both noted that political reconciliation is one of Iraqiyya's key requirements. "We need to be partners in the political process," emphasized Allawi, "if Iraqiyya is to submit ministers to return to the cabinet." He referenced the accusations against him by the Ministry of Interior as a personal assault. Allawi did not commit further on whether Iraqiyya will rejoin the cabinet.

ALLAWI'S VIEWS ON ARTICLE 140

¶10. (S/NF) Regarding Article 140, Allawi shared his "way forward" on the issue, discussing his idea of a commission that would include acceptable Arab and Kurdish representation to work through differences. He tried to put together a similar effort when he was Prime Minister, he said, that was led by Hamid Majid Mousa (Iraqiyya, Communist Party) in 2004, but it lacked funding and political focus. There needs to be a collective effort now, he stressed, but all sides -- including President Barzani -- need to agree to talk to one another on the issue. "The Kurds are coming to realize they can't have it both ways," said Allawi.

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